



European Council underlines the need to strengthen technology leadership in clean and digital technologies for the waterborne sector

Waterborne Technology Platform welcomes the European Council conclusions on competitiveness and twin transition, underlining the need for increased research, development and innovation and its deployment

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On 23 October, the European Council discussed [a competitive green transition](#) and recalled the urgent need to intensify collective efforts to ensure Europe's industrial renewal, modernisation and decarbonisation in a technologically neutral manner. Furthermore, the European Council underlined that, in this context, particular attention should be paid to traditional industries, such as shipping so that they remain resilient and competitive in a global market and a challenging geopolitical environment. Finally, the European Council stressed that further efforts are needed to strengthen European Union's competitive advantage in clean and digital technologies, as well as cutting-edge innovation.

These conclusions are particularly relevant in light of the negotiations concerning Horizon Europe beyond 2027, and the closely linked European Competitiveness Fund (ECF). The latter is a new instrument, and will focus on specific policy windows, including "clean transition and decarbonization". This policy window supports investments in the European waterborne sector to achieve clean, multimodal, digitalised, and safe transport and mobility solutions – including vessels, infrastructure (such as ports), systems and operations. Furthermore, investment, innovation and modernisation are anticipated in sustainable blue economy sectors, including shipbuilding and shipping, offshore energy, and blue technologies.

Horizon Europe, the EU's successor to its current research, development and innovation programme, aims to strengthen its scientific and technological foundations, enhance the circulation and uptake of knowledge, technology and innovation and mobilise public and private investments across the full research and innovation chain, from fundamental research to market commercialisation. Support to achieving the objectives of the ECF can be provided by contributions to European Partnerships in the framework of Horizon Europe. According to the proposal, European Partnerships are seen as an essential tool to deliver on industrial involvement and investment in collaborative research and innovation, and they should contribute to the specific objectives of the ECF policy windows.

Jaap Gebraad, Secretary General, Waterborne TP, said: *"The transition towards a resilient, competitive and sustainable waterborne sector requires a joint and coordinated approach. Pooling public and private resources towards research, development, innovation and its deployment, will be key for the sustainable transition of the waterborne sector, and critical for enhancing the technology leadership of its manufacturing industry. The Waterborne TP is currently developing a technology roadmap, paving the way for a resilient, competitive and sustainable future, and designing the building blocks for Horizon Europe beyond 2027 and the European Competitiveness Fund. To implement the technology roadmap, the renewal of the current Partnership on Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport, including the extension of its scope, will be a logical next step, and we look forward to welcoming this implementation mode in the upcoming industrial maritime and port strategies. The European Council conclusions of 23 October clearly support this approach."*



WATERBORNE TP has been set up as an industry-oriented Technology Platform to establish a continuous dialogue between all waterborne stakeholders, such as classification societies, shipbuilders, shipowners, maritime equipment manufacturers, infrastructure and service providers, universities or research institutes, and with the EU Institutions, including Member States (www.waterborne.eu). The members of Waterborne TP comprise members as well as associated members from both maritime and inland navigation countries, representing about 19 Member States. In addition, the Associations member of the Waterborne Technology Platform represent the broader waterborne sector throughout the entire EU.

Enquiries concerning how to join and become more closely involved in the “Zero-Emission Waterborne Transport” partnership or other activities of the Waterborne TP can be sent to: Jaap Gebraad, Secretary General Waterborne TP, jaap.gebraad@waterborne.eu, tel: +32 493 835 626